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Chicopee Register

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City continues working for veterans

By Dalton Zbierski
Staff Writer

When the nation faced past threats from abroad, brave men and women rose to the occasion, putting their lives on the line to preserve the American way of life.

As the current pandemic rages on, the city is working to ensure folks never forget those local veterans who may be at risk from a new enemy.

"I think that everyone struggles with isolation. I think veterans more so because when we train, we train as a team or a squad and we're always looking out for the person next to us. To isolate us, especially during a time of crisis, can be very unnatural for us," said Stephanie Shaw, director of the city's Veterans Services office.

Shaw is working around the clock to get in touch with as many veterans as is possible. Outreach has always been her aim, but in the days of social distancing, the task is incredibly difficult.

"We're relying on social media and the connections we've already established to hope that veterans who might be suffering financially or having food scarcity issues to remind them we're still here and have resources and that we can still help them even through these modified ways," said Shaw.

See VETERANS page 8



FILE PHOTO

Members of the Chicopee High School Junior ROTC salute veterans during last year's ceremony at Veterans' Memorial Plaza Nov. 11 as part of the city's Veterans Day festivities. Veterans in need of servies are encouraged to contact the Veterans Services office at 594-3470.

BUSINESS

TDI personnel give inside look at Chicopee grants

By Dalton Zbierski
Staff Writer

It's been established that 13 businesses in Chicopee's West End will receive grants of up to $5,000 from MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative, but the municipality is far from the only recipient in the commonwealth; from Springfield to Fitchburg, MassDevelopment is aiding communities across the state.

Andrea Monson was assigned to Chicopee in 2019 and has worked closely with residents of all ages and backgrounds to enhance the stature of the city's downtown. Progress was being made ahead of the arrival of COVID-19 as the business district had begun to show signs of renewed life.

To ensure that progress is not lost entirely in any of its TDI districts, MassDevelopment awarded emergency relief grants. Monson clarified what exactly that means for Chicopee.

"It is our hope that this flexible emergency grant assistance will provide some immediate relief for local businesses in the Chicopee TDI District that may be struggling from the impacts of COVID-19. As Chicopee's TDI Fellow, I will continue providing on-the-ground economic development assistance, and help businesses to navigate available resources at every level," said Monson.

In addition to Chicopee, TDI Districts in Springfield, Lynn, Worcester, New Bedford, Fall River, Haverhill, Chelsea, Fitchburg, Lawrence, Brockton, Holyoke, Peabody, Pittsfield and Revere all have received $65,000 to be distributed among TDI Partners, which can include public, private and nonprofit organizations.

To receive a grant, businesses in Chicopee's West End were asked to complete an application that weighed its contributions to the community. Funding will be distributed to 13 entities that best match the requirements.

The Chicopee Chamber of Commerce elected to split the emergency funding 13 ways; it was not mandated by the TDI program. In addition to Monson and the Chamber, the Chicopee TDI Partnership consists of the city of Chicopee, the Planning Department and a number of downtown businesses.

Kelsey Schiller, MassDevelopment's director of communications, spoke on the status of the TDI Program in Chicopee. Monson has remained present, aiding the district as it endures the economic hardships that have brought on by the lockdown.

"While various planned events were canceled or postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the work of TDI Fellow Andrea Monson and the TDI Partnership is ongo-

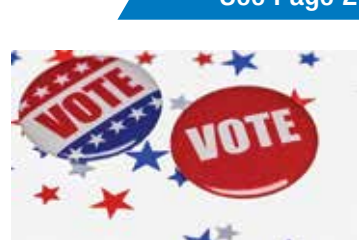
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Police at full staff, in good health

By Dalton Zbierski
Staff Writer



FILE PHOTO

Pubic Information Officer Michael Wilk displays the department's autism-themed badge from the steps of City Hall in April 2019. He reports the department has taken a number of steps to keep residents and officers safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Physical contact may be limited, but the Chicopee Police Department is fully staffed and doing its due diligence to preserve the safety of residents.

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a myriad of new protocols have been put in place to best ensure the health and wellness of the department.

"Our WESTCOMM dispatch now screens all calls," said Mike Wilk, public information officer. "Calls that do not require a police officer in person, those people are referred to an online reporting system. For medical calls, our dispatch asks pertinent questions about the COVID-19 and relays information to first responders."

Wilk is accustomed to appearing at gatherings across the city to promote safety and conduct outreach. In the wake of the pandemic, he's been forced to rely heavily on messaging, phone calls and posts on the department's Facebook page to spread pertinent information.

Thus far, over a month into the lock down, the extra precautions have paid off. Despite a growing number of cases in the city, Wilk reported that no one in the department has contracted the novel coronavirus and no one has been placed in quarantine.

"Officers have personal protective equipment and will not enter a home for a medical call unless a life or death emergency. If they have to [enter a residence], they will gear up with all PPE equipment, including goggles, masks, gloves and suits," said Wilk.

Within the Public Safety Complex, additional measures have been taken to "increase awareness and safety." Offices have been divided for social distancing purposes and several employees are permitted to work remotely.

Wilk noted that the department has maintained an effective line of communication with City Hall. He's also been impressed by the response of private commercial entities.

"We have been fortunate and thankful that businesses have worked with us, as well the Board of Health, to keep non-essential items from not being sold and occupancy at a comfortable level for both customers and employees," said Wilk.

Two police officers assigned to the Board of Health are responsible for monitoring retail stores throughout the city. The department is adamant in its request that residents stay home unless it is absolutely necessary to travel and urges residents to "maintain social distance guidelines" by keeping a minimum of six feet of separation between others.

A variety of interactive videos have been posted on the department's Facebook page in recent weeks. From book readings to a lengthy Easter Bunny ride, the department is doing its best to stay in touch with the community from afar.

Wilk emphasized that all residents must adhere to social distancing guidelines. He offered important advice for all who will listen.

"This virus does not care about age, race, gender. It is affecting everyone, young and old. No matter who you are, be cautious and follow guidelines, including masks, washing hands, and staying home, and not going to work if feeling ill," he said.

The department's Facebook page can be found online at Facebook.com/ChicopeePoliceDepartment. One is encouraged to visit the page or chicopeema.gov for additional updates.

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Chicopee Register
Obituary Policy

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary,** costing $120, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

Library offers services, advice during shutdown

By Dalton Zbierski
Staff Writer

The Chicopee Public Library may be physically closed, but its resources are readily available. With school out indefinitely, library staff members are encouraging children and teens continue reading.

"Read everything! This is an opportunity to read the things that you want to read and go at your own pace. We're still here and available to everybody. There's a lot online that people can read," said Erin Daly, youth services coordinator.

"Find stuff to read because you can go places in your mind while you can't go places physically."

- Erin Daly, *youth services coordinator, Chicopee Public Library*



STAFF PHOTO BY DALTON ZBIERSKI

With city offices closed to the public, the parking lot of the Chicopee Public Library is empty. Residents may access a variety of resources and services from their home computers.

The building is currently off-limits to the public, but a skeleton crew of library personnel is able to operate safely inside of the facility from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each week day. Books cannot be sent out into the pubic, but the library is doing its best to offer residents a versatile selection of online materials.

"I'm glad that a lot of people are able access all of these things online because there's a lot of material such as our genealogy resource, Ancestry.com, which you can access from home right now. We also have our New York Times login so you can read all of the news, and there's career resources out there, which I think people are going to be needing a lot," said Daly.

Residents can access a number of apps and online tools from home. With Mango Language Learning, one can practice speaking a new language, and an app named RBdigital gives patrons access to a variety of magazines and audiobooks.

The library also subscribes to Hoopla, a digital media service that enables patrons to view movies, television shows, comics, instructional videos and music on a smartphone or tablet. Daly passed along information on another exciting app called Libby.

"Libby is the app for OverDrive, which is [accessible] through our [Central Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing] consortium. That's the online e-book and 'e-stuff' platform. Libby is a really cool app; you can get it on your phone and you can access a bunch of stuff on there."

No matter how plentiful the library's resources may be, the library itself feels quite empty without its patrons. Daly expressed the emotions that she and her colleagues have felt during the lockdown thus far.

"We really miss everybody. All of our favorite activities can't happen the way that we'd like them to happen. I miss seeing all my people and all of my families. It's hard to plan for the future because we don't really know what's going to happen," said Daly, who especially misses "Teen o'clock," which typically occurs at 2:15 p.m. each day as students flock to the building after leaving Dupont Middle School on Front Street.

The library has used its website and Facebook page to update residents and "post fun links." Daly noted that the page is updated multiple times each day.

She continued to stress the value of reading during this "weird" time and explained why the art can be a saving grace during times of difficulty.

"Find stuff to read because you can go places in your mind while you can't go places physically. Be kind to each other and keep using your brains. Keep using your imagination. We'll get through it, and it will be great to see everybody together again after this is over," she said.

City parks open for passive recreation; events canceled

While most buildings are closed and public gatherings banned to help limit the spread of the novel coronavirus, the city's parks and recreational facilities remain open in a limited capacity.

The Parks and Recreation Department is encouraging passive recreation within the city's parks as the community continues to take precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19 infections. Passive recreation consists of walking, running, bicycle riding and similar activities.

Those utilizing open facilities are encouraged to adhere to current public health guidelines including social distancing at all times and in all areas of the parks, staying home when sick and frequent hand-washing.

Playgrounds, athletic fields, basketball and tennis courts, skate parks and pavilions are closed at this time. As group sports are not compliant with social distancing, the Parks and Recreation Department advises such activity should not occur.

Additionally, the department made the decision to cancel all programs scheduled through April 23, with spring sports registrations suspended until further notice. The annual Easter Egg Hunt has been suspended.

Updated registrations and procedures will be released at a later date.

For more information, visit chicopeerec.com or follow the department on Facebook (@chicopeeparksdept) or Twitter (@ChicopeeParks). The Parks Office remains closed to the public until May 4, but calls may be directed to 594-3481.

Residents encouraged to vote by mail

In an effort to limit exposure to the new coronavirus, the Board of Registrars of Voters is asking residents of the Second Hampden and Hampshire District (Chicopee Wards 7A, 7B, 8A, and 9A) to apply for an absentee ballot and vote by mail.

The early voting period for the May 19 Special State Election was extended until noon on May 18. Any registered voter who wants to take precautions related to COVID-19 may request that an absentee ballot be mailed to them. Although there is an official application on the city website, www.chicopeema.gov, and MA Election Division website, www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleev/evidx.htm, any form of written request containing the voter's signature is also acceptable.

To request a mail-in application, call the Registrars of Voters at 594-1550 or send an email to jsurdyka@chicopeema.gov.

Counting Turtles

Did you find Turley the Turtle in last week's edition of the Chicopee Register? Turley appeared 13 times.

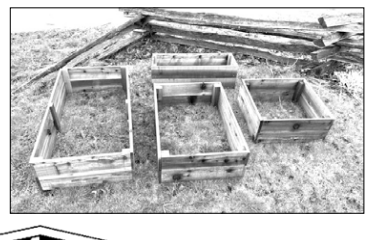
Here are the official submissions:

Kayla Wegrzyn, Chicopee: 10

Steve Curylo, Chicopee: 11

Be sure to look hard in this week's paper! Email your count along with your name and town of residence by noon on Monday to tyler@turley.com.

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EDITORIAL

Be bear aware this spring

Though it's beginning to look like our shared community life will never emerge from its coronavirus hibernation, spring is definitely in the air — and the bears are waking up.

Soon, flowers will be in full bloom and temperatures will climb above 60 degrees (and stay there). Just as the rising temperatures and blossoming woods inspire folks to get outside, another group of mammals will also be walking around: the black bear.

While bears may be intimidating and strike fear in the minds of many people, bears and people often peacefully coexist with little to no contact. In some instances, they cause property damage to gardens and bird feeders as they search for a quick meal. In most, the bear comes away with a bad reputation or with a bounty on its head.

According to the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, there are at least 4,500 black bears statewide. Those bears are now active and in search of food. To avoid property damage or the possible killing of a bear, MassWildlife encourages folks to remove bird feeders, garbage and compost from outside their homes, and to properly secure chickens, beehives and any livestock.

Perhaps their most important piece of advice is to "keep bears wild," never feeding the animals intentionally or even unintentionally by leaving pet dishes or other food sources outdoors. Officials say most nuisance situations can be avoided by removing food or modifying human behavior.

Rather than using bird feeders, officials suggest planting native plants and adding water features, which may help to increase the attractiveness to birds while reducing the unnatural feeding of bears and other potential nuisance animals.

When composting, folks should avoid adding meat, oily and sweet-smelling or -tasting materials. Such products attract bears and other animals. Garbage, MassWildlife says, should be placed outside just prior to pickup and stored in closed containers in a garage or outbuilding.

Even when cubs are present, officials remind folks it is uncommon for a bear to attack. Mother bears often send their cubs up trees to avoid danger and won't let them down until the threat is gone. If an encounter with any bear occurs, people should calmly back away and avoid running, talking calmly.

In the rare circumstances when a black bear may show aggressive behavior, folks should stand their ground and fight back if necessary. Make noise, wave arms or branches and look bigger than the bear.

More information about living with bears may be found online at mass.gov/bears.

While bears may be intimidating, their presence is often a natural occurrence. By being proactive and being aware of our own behavior, we can keep it that way.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less in length. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require letter writers to include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources.

Send letters to: The Chicopee Register,
24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069
or email chicopeeregister@turley.com.
The deadline for submissions is Friday at noon.

GUEST COLUMN



Joan E. B. Coombs

When windows open or close

During the spring weeks, anytime a window is opened, there's a refreshing breath of fragrant, fresh outdoor air that invigorates us. Opening a window on a spring morning invites us to "smell the sunshine" of the beginning moments of a new day.

Looking through a closed window, seeing springtime arriving in all of its floral displays, in nearby yards, allows beauty to be seen through transparency. Seeing things clearly defines new awareness, appreciations and awakenings.

While in these weeks of the global COVID-19 pandemic, we are living, working and studying behind closed doors instead of being outside with our daily schedules. Whether it's working outside the home, school, college education on campus, or attending our places of worship, or times of celebrating anniversaries, birthdays, weddings or honoring lives well-lived. Some family events have had to be remotely viewed on computer screens or have sadly been postponed.

Yet, countless windows of new awareness, appreciation and awakenings are opening up for us to observe, value, learn from and help with. New windows of insight have opened informing us of how America is working together to save lives, deliver mail, products and medical equipment, stock and serve in grocery stores, serve in pharmacies, and transport by air, land and sea thereby meeting strategic needs. Restaurants and fast food businesses are safely and efficiently providing drive-thru and pick up meals.

Our nation's military are actively involved in helping with scientific research, deploying units from coast to coast for meeting urgent medical needs: helping ship and move hospital and surgical supplies, constructing medical units and reinforcing medical teams serving in emergency rooms front lines, and hospital wards.

Public education is being taught at home until schools and colleges can safely reopen. Across America, homeschooling has been an alternative choice. A homeschooling Mom, Julie L. L., while working in a healthcare-related vocation, still creatively schedules her high school student's subjects. Current events are included in today's hot topics and are answered in essay forms. "Lessons they are learning and getting a credit for: 'Science: What is a pandemic and how to live through one?;' 'Psychology: How to maintain mental health during a pandemic;' 'Sociology: How empathy and common sense are key issues during a pandemic;' 'Mathematics: How to measure six feet wherever you go;' 'Statistics: Understand where data is obtained and how to use it with intelligence;' 'Geography: How small the world really is'."

Trucks roll along the highways 24/7 delivering goods nationwide. With restaurants being closed, finding food is complicated. Amazingly, truck drivers at interstate truck stops are being surprised with meals contributed by caring, appreciative corporations. On small highway road stops, individuals are also showing their appreciation with signs and meals.

It's being said that, "This is a time when giving matters the most." There's a global and national awakening: everyday heroes, in all walks of life are helping each other and those in need. In our cities and towns, charitable nonprofit organizations are providing medical care, hope, food, clothing, and basic necessities. Churches and synagogues are live streaming services and offering spiritual guidance.

Let's view our world through opened windows and appreciate the abundant, generous, heroic workings around us. And, when our windows are closed, especially for protective reasons, let's still see, with transparent clarity, that another day will dawn with "windows of opportunities."



BUSINESS

Turley Publications is liberal with regard to its business coverage polices, but we do have some standards folks need to understand. First, local businesses and merchants are just as much institutions in our towns as the library and schools. Without them, there are no towns.

We will feature coverage of local businesses that are new, have a major expansion, moving, closing, under new management or ownership, celebrating a milestone anniversary, or have been thrust into the news realm. Merchants can request that coverage through the editor, or for our existing advertising clients, through their ad representatives.

For more information on business coverage for The Chicopee Register, please email chicopeeregister@turley.com.

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WE CARE ABOUT YOUR NEWS!

The Chicopee Register welcomes submissions of news in or related to Chicopee and its residents. Our "People News," is filled with submitted engagement announcements, wedding announcements, birth announcements, your new baby or news about your 25th or 50th anniversary celebrations. Please e-mail correspondence along with a photo to chicopeeregister@turley.com or send it to: Chicopee Register, c/o Turley Publications, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

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City reallocates CDBG funds to address food insecurity

Given significantly increased community demand on the food pantry and meal programs, the city of Chicopee has reallocated federal Community Development Block Grant funds to address the growing challenge of food insecurity, Mayor John Vieau announced.

"Based upon the data from Lorraine's Food Pantry and the School Department's lunch program, it is clear that more Chicopee residents are experiencing food insecurity," Vieau said. "The federal CARES Act provided flexibility to CDBG funds. We are using that flexibility to support two food programs."

CDBG funds will be immediately available to support the efforts of Lorraine's Soup Kitchen and Pantry at 170 Pendexter Ave. and the Council on Aging's Program at River Mills, 5 W Main St.

Lorraine's has expanded its Pantry operating hours and is now open Monday through Friday from10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The River Mills Meals program operated through the Council on Aging has been expanded to provide an evening meal on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Meals for weekends are distributed on Friday. Distribution is done via a curbside pick-up between 1:30 and 3 p.m. A $2 donation is encouraged; reservations are required and can be made by calling 413-534-3698 the day before.

Women to Watch announces new dates for planned events this spring

Due to the changing climate of the current pandemic, the Women to Watch USA Western Mass. Chapter has made changes to their spring event schedule.

The annual "Top 25 Women Watch in Western Massachusetts" nominations have been extended to April 30. Nominations are open to the public and available online at www.women2watchusawestma.com.

The public voting for the nominees will take place May 1-31. There are 23 categories available where people can nominate their favorite business woman who has made a difference not only in their business but also in their community.

Winners will be announced in June and the actual awards dinner will take place Oct. 22 at the Log Cabin in Holyoke.

The Continuing Education Women's Scholarship applications are available at local colleges, universities and specialty schools. Any woman who has gone back to school and is over the age of 21, and is currently enrolled in an area educational facility is eligible. For information, contact Women to Watch Scholarship Chairman Tracy Viola at Tracysellsrealestate@comcast.net.

For more information or to join the chapter, visit www.women2watchusawestma.com.

State expands COVID-19 testing for grocery store workers

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration issued further public health guidance April 10, expanding resources for critical workers and increasing Massachusetts National Guard activation to support its ongoing response to mitigate the spread of the new coronavirus.

A new Department of Public Health advisory, consistent with CDC guidance, recommends all residents wear a mask or face covering in public when social distancing is not possible.

The administration has also expanded access to the free priority COVID-19 testing sites for first responders located at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough and the Eastern States Exposition to include grocery store workers.

Additionally, Gov. Charlie Baker authorized the activation of an additional 3,000 more military personnel of the Massachusetts National Guard.

Mask Advisory

The administration issued guidance to residents and Executive Branch employees recommending the use of a face covering or cloth mask when in situations where maintaining proper social distancing measures are not possible to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as in a grocery store.

A face covering may include anything that covers one's nose and mouth, including a mask, scarf or bandana. Health care masks, such as N95 masks, should not be used and should be preserved for health care workers and first responders.

Cloth masks should not be worn by young children under the age of 2 years, persons with difficulty breathing or those who are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

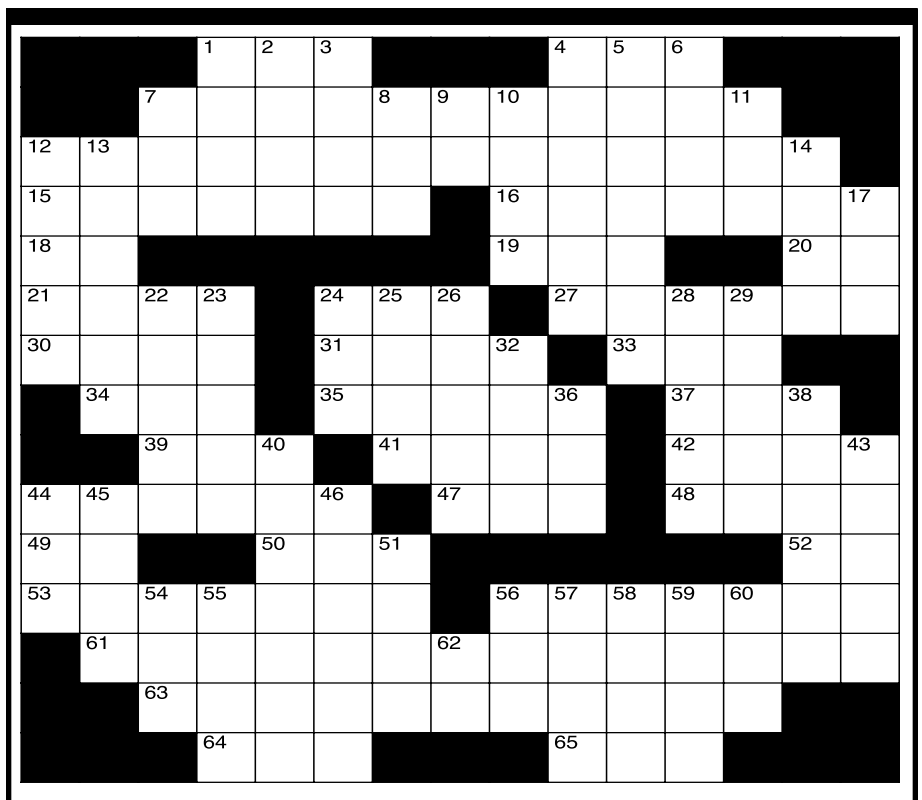
Testing

The administration and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security expanded access to the free, priority COVID-19 testing sites for first responders to now include grocery store and supermarket workers. Beginning April 11, the men and women who provide critical access to food and other necessities may schedule an appointment to receive COVID-19 testing at the sites located at Gillette Stadium and the Big E fairgrounds in West Springfield.

All appointments must be made in advance by the worker's supervisor or manager, and personnel do not need to be symptomatic to be eligible.

Residents may visit www.mass.gov/covid19 for the latest information, call 2-1-1 with questions, or text "COVIDMA" to 888-777 to subscribe to text-alert updates.

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CLUES ACROSS
1. Germanic mythological god
4. Cash machine
7. Improvement
12. What voters want
15. Sheepish
16. Placed at powerful level
18. Measure of illumination
19. Trent Reznor's band
20. Commercial
21. Amounts of time
24. English broadcaster
27. Rolls of tobacco
30. Position
31. Expresses pleasure
33. Corporate exec (abbr.)
34. Body part
35. Bleated
37. Businessman
39. Beats per minute
41. Defunct Italian monetary unit
42. Broken branch
44. Put in advance
47. Arrest
48. Prefix indicating adjacent to
49. Artificial intelligence
50. Disfigure
52. The Fighting Irish (abbr.)
53. Not in any place
56. Predict
61. A system of getting stuff from one place to another
63. Philosophy of the principles of things
64. US gov't office (abbr.)
65. Seaborgium's former name (abbr.)

CLUES DOWN
1. Network connector
2. Primordial matter
3. Get up
4. Uncoordinated
5. Ill-fated cruise ship
6. Work hard
7. Drivers' speed
8. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
9. Healthcare pro
10. Egyptian Sun god
11. Expresses the negative
12. Some are three-legged
13. Clothing manufacturer
14. Close by
17. Tooth caregiver
22. Housing material
23. Flows through
24. Founder of Babism
25. Honorific title
26. A type of letter
28. Seize and hold firmly
29. Artery
32. Body fluids
36. Press against lightly
38. An island in the Pacific
40. A reminder of past events
43. Austrian spa town
44. Peter's last name
45. Something a mob might do
46. Of the bones of the feet
51. "Amazing Stories" writer
54. Nazi-resistant youth group (abbr.)
55. Used to have (Scottish)
56. A way to cook
57. Japanese port city
58. Type of precipitation
59. Engrave
60. Female sibling
62. Expresses emotion

CROSSWORD SOLUTION ON PAGE 6

BEING A good neighbor MATTERS, NOW MORE THAN EVER.

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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

Schools receive $10,000 to expand meal service

To support families during school closures, Chicopee Public Schools is providing children aged 0-21 with free, nutritious breakfast and lunch meals every day of the week as part of the USDA's emergency COVID-19 response.

The Eos Foundation awarded the district a $10,000 grant to support continued distribution of meals to children.

"We want everyone to know that these healthy meals are available to every child, from babies to young adults. You don't have to be a district student or even live in Chicopee to receive them. In fact, parents/ caregivers can pick up meals on children's behalf to help ensure safe social distancing," said Superintendent of Schools Lynn Clark. "We know that home food supplies are running low and we are happy to help. This is a federally funded program and the food is nutritious, so please come take your meals."

CPS offers meals at 13 sites throughout the district, including 10 schools and three additional sites.

Children receive two bagged meals a day and are welcome to take both meals at once. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, caregivers pick up four meals (breakfast and lunch) for multiple days.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Chicopee Public Schools is set to receive an additional $10,000 through the EoS Foundation to expand meal delivery services to students in need.

Children do not need to be present for caregivers to receive a meal. All children, regardless of their city or town of residence, are eligible.

All sites observe social distancing practices and ask participants remain a minimum of six feet from each other.

Meals are available Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Barry, Bellamuy, Bowe, Bowie, Chicopee High, Chicopee Comprehensive, Fairview, Litwin, Stefanik and Streiber schools. Additionally, folks may pick up meals at the Chicopee Police Substations, 803 Chicopee St. and 35 Center St., and the School Department, 180 Broadway St.

"We are proud to help support the great work of Melanie Wilk, the Chicopee School Nutrition Director, and her team," said Andrea Silbert, president of the Eos Foundation. "They are front-lines heroes, ensuring distribution of nutritious meals for children at this unprecedented time."

Anyone who cannot make it out of their house to pick up a meal is encouraged to call Melanie Wilk at

413-594-3453 or mwilk@cpsge.org.

HCSS East remains in session

For the last three weeks HCSS-East has continued to operate as a virtual school. Hampden Charter School of Science in Chicopee continues its educational activities on its online platform.

HCSS Virtual School has been setup to provide parents and students most up to date information about the COVID-19 pandemic and how the school is responding to it. HCSS students attend online Zoom sessions to connect with their teachers everyday between 10 a.m. and noon. Students also have the opportunity to connect with the counselors.

Teachers assign classwork on Google classroom which could be completed online. All students have their Chromebooks with them and technical assistance is provided by HCSS IT department online and on site on Wednesdays between noon and 2 p.m. at the school.

For more information, visit hampdencharter.org or email school administration at info@hampdencharter.org.

Max Cares Foundation extends scholarship deadline

HARTFORD, Conn. – Max Cares Foundation Inc. announced a deadline extension for the charitable organization's scholarships for students looking to attend or who currently attend a culinary arts or hospitality school.

The application is available online at www.maxcaresfoundation.org/scholarships. The deadline for application, originally announced for April 1, has been extended to May 1, 2020.

Up to $20,000 in scholarships are awarded annually, double the amount provided last year. The maximum scholarship grant also doubled to $5,000 over previous scholarships. In 2019, four students from the Greater Hartford and Greater Springfield communities were provided scholarships.

Applicants must be a Greater Hartford or Greater Springfield high school senior in good standing, eligible for graduation the same year as the scholarship application and seeking to earn a secondary degree in Culinary Arts or Hospitality oriented program. Students may also be currently enrolled in a secondary culinary arts or hospitality-oriented program. Previous MCF scholarship recipients who are continuing their education are able to reapply.

The application and additional information can be found online at www.maxcaresfoundation.org/scholarships.

HCC plans 'epic celebrations' for Class of 2020

HOLYOKE – In lieu of its traditional spring commencement ceremony at the Mass Mutual Center, Holyoke Community College will recognize the Class of 2020 with a virtual celebration in August and also invite graduates to walk across the stage next year with the Class of 2021.

"Every year, one of my most anticipated moments is Commencement," HCC President Christina Royal said in an email communication to students April 10. "As a first-generation college student, I remember how significant Commencement was for my family and me. I take great pride in joining you and your families in celebrating your achievements, and in shaking each of your hands as you walk across the stage. But as we have all seen, the rapid spread of COVID-19 has changed nearly everything. It's no surprise that we will not be able to host this event in person on May 30, 2020."

The new plan is for HCC to hold a virtual celebration in August, complete with special remarks, honors and recognition of graduates. Each member of the Class of 2020 will receive a surprise package in the mail during the summer and be invited to host their own celebrations to share through videos and photos using the hashtag #HolyokeCC20.

The exact date for the virtual celebration has not been determined.

Also, Royal said, "The Class of 2020 will have a traditional Commencement in May 2021, where we will celebrate each of you, in person with your loved ones present, along with the Class of 2021, on what will be a truly historic day."

"Your perseverance toward graduation in these unprecedented times deserves to be celebrated in every way possible," she said. "On behalf of your faculty and the entire HCC community, I applaud you for your strength and resilience, and will look forward to seeing you virtually in August and at the Mass Mutual Center in May 2021. What epic celebrations these will be!"

Press Club scholarship applications due April 17

SPRINGFIELD – The Valley Press Club will award up to six $1,000 scholarships to high school seniors in Western Massachusetts and northern Connecticut pursuing a career in journalism.

The Valley Press Club Scholarships, funded by contributions and dues to the Press Club, are for students planning careers in print, online or broadcast journalism.

The Republican Scholarship, funded by The Republican newspaper and administered by the club, is for students living within the newspaper's circulation area who are planning careers in print journalism.

The 22News Scholarship, funded by WWLP-22News and administered by the club, is for students planning careers in broadcast journalism.

The Edward J. Malley Jr. Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of a chief photographer for the Springfield Newspapers, is for students planning careers in photojournalism.

The Rhonda Swan Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of the award-winning journalist, editor and author, is for students who are underrepresented, in the Springfield area, planning careers in journalism.

The Al Jaffe Scholarship, funded by Mr. Jaffe, the Valley Press Club's first scholarship recipient in 1964, who retired in 2015 as vice president of talent negotiation and production recruitment at ESPN, is for students planning careers in broadcast journalism or sports journalism.

Primary emphasis is placed on career goals, writing ability, scholastic aptitude and overall achievement as measured by an applicant's high school transcript, class rank, academic awards, SAT scores and extracurricular activities.

Scholarship applications are available at www.ValleyPressClub.com, high school guidance offices, or by emailing NTassinari@TheBigE.com.

Applications may be sent by mail to Noreen Tassinari, VPC Scholarship Chair, Eastern States Exposition, 1305 Memorial Ave., West Springfield, MA 01089 or electronically to NTassinari@TheBigE.com. The deadline for submissions is April 17.

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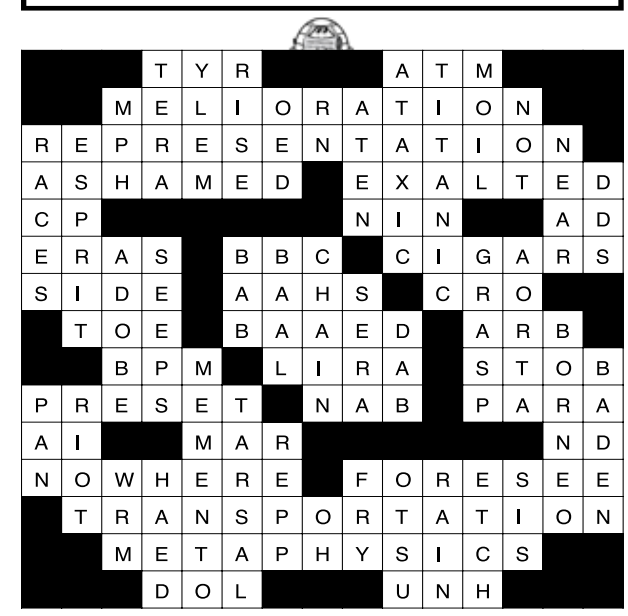
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SPRING SPORTS

PVIAC preparing for possible spring season

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

With the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association's Board of Directors and the Tournament Management Committee highly engaged in remote meetings on a weekly basis trying to make decisions on the spring season, another body is getting ready to go just in case.

In the springtime, many athletic directors are making their schedules for the fall season, as high school sports usually finalize schedules a season in advance.

But there has been a lot of working going on the past couple of weeks to establish a new schedule for the springtime.

This schedule would focus on using the modified timeline and try and to fit in a 12-game regular season between May 4 and June 12.

The schedule would allow teams to play between two and three contests per week in most team sports. This includes: baseball, softball, boys lacrosse, girls lacrosse, boys tennis, girls tennis, and boys volleyball.

Agawam High School Athletic Director David Stratton, a member of the Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Association's Executive Board, said there was recently a meeting of the membership to discuss the spring season.

"It was a really good meeting," said Stratton. "We had it remotely with about 40 athletic directors attending."

Stratton said the main point of the meeting with the PVIAC's desire to give student-athletes a spring season, in some modified form.

He did not say if fans would be allowed at games, as of now, but said if school does resume, a 12-game maximum regular season would be the goal of the PVIAC.

"We want to give these kids a season if we can," said Stratton. "So the athletic directors have begun creating schedules, which have gone to the league and individual sport schedulers to be finalized."

At this point, however, it could be all for nothing. Despite that, the athletic directors want to be ready in the event they are allowed to hold sports.A

See PVIAC page 8

THUNDERBIRDS



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Paul Thompson, a member of the 2019-2020 Springfield Thunderbird was recently named IOA/American Specialty AHL Man of the Year.

Thompson named Specialty Man of the Year for T-Birds



Paul Thompson, Springfield Thunderbirds

SPRINGFIELD - The Springfield Thunderbirds are proud to announce that Paul Thompson has been named the team's winner of the IOA/American Specialty AHL Man of the Year award for his outstanding contributions to the Springfield community during the 2019-20 season.

In his third season as a Thunderbird and his second as team captain, the New England native has continued to show his commitment to the community beyond the ice surface.

Before the 2019-20 season began, Thompson was a regular sight at a number of offseason functions, including the Thunderbirds' Street Hockey Tournament, which was born following the untimely passing of a young local hockey player, Alex Blais, two summers ago. Thompson also gave back to the youth hockey community of Western Mass., starting and running the Paul Thompson Hockey Camp out of MassConn United for beginning hockey players.

In the month of November, in advance of the club's second annual Hockey Fights Cancer Night, Thompson lent his hand to share a deeply personal story to aid a cause near and dear to his family – his cousin Angela's cancer battle and #AngelasArmy initiative. Angela's Army makes "care packages" for patients undergoing cancer treatment, and was born out of Angela's desire to assist other patients, providing comfort to them even as she was going through her own battle.

In addition to participating in a number of team events, one that shined through the most was during the holiday season. Along with teammates Ethan Prow, Rob O'Gara and Tommy Cross, Thompson led a selfless journey to brighten the lives of a mother and two young children who suddenly had to endure the passing of their father just weeks before the Christmas holiday. The captain and his teammates spent hundreds of dollars on toys and essential items to make the family feel special during their most trying time. The story was documented by Western Mass News and can be seen: here

Thompson is now one of 31 finalists for the AHL's 2019-20 Yanick Dupre Memorial Award, honoring the overall IOA/American Specialty AHL Man of the Year. The league award is named after the former Hershey Bears forward and AHL All-Star who died in 1997 following a 16-month battle with leukemia. The winner of the Yanick Dupre Memorial Award will be announced by the American Hockey League at a later date.

BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

Late Kobe Bryant headlines next Hall of Fame class

SPRINGFIELD – Today on ESPN, the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame announced the nine honorees in the Class of 2020 presented by Fifty-Five South Ventures. The Class of 2020 will be enshrined in Springfield, Massachusetts, the Birthplace of Basketball, on Saturday, Aug. 29.

As previously announced, in light of the unique circumstance surrounding the Class of 2020, the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Election Process Committee suspended the Direct Election Categories for one year with the exception of the International Committee. This year's distinguished class includes honorees from the North American committee, Women's Committee and International Committee. To be elected, North American and Women's Committee finalists must receive 18 of 24 votes from the Honors Committee for election into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

The Class of 2020 includes: 18-time NBA All-Star and five-time NBA champion Kobe Bryant, 15-time NBA All-Star and three-time NBA Finals MVP Tim Duncan, 15-time NBA All-Star and nine-time NBA All-Defensive First Team selection Kevin Garnett, four-time National Coach of the Year Eddie Sutton, two-time NBA Champion coach Rudy Tomjanovich, 10-time WNBA All-Star and four-time Olympic gold medalist Tamika Catchings, three-time NCAA National Championship Coach of Baylor Kim Mulkey, five-time Division II National Coach of the Year Barbara Stevens and longtime FIBA executive Patrick Baumann.

"The Class of 2020 is undoubtedly one of the most historic of all time and the talent and social influence of these nine honorees is beyond measure," said John L. Doleva, President and CEO of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. "In 2020, the basketball community has suffered the unimaginable loss of iconic figures Commissioner David Stern and Kobe Bryant, as well as the game itself due to COVID-19. We have also banded together like never before in appreciation of the game and those who have made it the uniting force it is today. Today we thank the Class of 2020 for all they have done for the game of basketball and we look forward to celebrating them at Enshrinement in August."

The Class of 2020 Enshrinement festivities will begin at Mohegan Sun on Friday, Aug. 28 with the newly formatted Enshrinement Tip-Off Celebration and Awards Gala. The Class of 2020 and over 50 returning Hall of Famers will then journey to Springfield, Mass. for the annual celebratory events taking place at the newly renovated Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and Springfield Symphony Hall on the Aug. 29. The second day of events in Springfield will include a special community-fo-

See HALL page 8

Valley Wheel Over-30 Baseball League looking for new players

REGION – The Valley Wheel Over-30 Baseball League is seeking new players for the upcoming 2020 season. The league is seeking players ages 28 and up. Players turning 28 this year are eligible. However, only players 30 and older can pitch. The league plays 15 regular season games with games being held mostly on Sundays with a couple of weekday games thrown in the mix as well as a special Mother's Day Saturday game in early May. However, due to the current circumstances, the league schedule has been pushed back. The league still plans to play its season once bans on gatherings are lifted. The league is built on comradery, fair play, and having a good time with friends. If interested in trying out, go to www.valleywheelbaseball.com. The rules of the league and new player forms can be found on the site. For further information, you can contact the league's commissioner, Jim Nason at wheel12@comcast.net or call him at (413) 433-4308. Tryouts will be taking place in the early weeks of April, weather permitting, with a draft following the tryouts.

First Monadnock event set for May 9

WINCHESTER, N.H. – Due to the coronavirus outbreak and based on the orders by New Hampshire state officials, the Tri-Track Open Modified Series and NHSTRA events at Monadnock Speedway are postponed through at least May 4. According to the speedway's website, the offices are also closed until at least May 4, but staff of the office are checking email and messages every day. Currently, the season is set to open on Saturday, May 9 with a full slate of events, including: 100-lap Tri Track Modified Series, NHSTRA modifieds, late model sportsman, street stocks, mini-stocks, pure stocks and young guns. It is unknown whether speedway events will be open to the public when they resume.

Baystate seeks critical blood donations

SPRINGFIELD – As President Donald Trump left the White House briefing room during a recent coronavirus update, someone shouted out "donate blood!"

It was an important message. The need is so great that Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker included blood and platelet donors on his list of essential services.

America faces a severe blood shortage during the novel coronavirus pandemic and the U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams is urging healthy individuals to donate blood as the crisis unfolds.

Until further notice during the COVID-19 pandemic, Baystate Health is relocating all blood and platelet donation to 361 Whitney Ave. in Holyoke.

Blood donations will take place daily, Monday through Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are suggested and can be made by calling 413-794-4600.

Platelet donations will also occur at Whitney Avenue, but are by appointment only at 413-794-4600.

Additional protocols are being implemented during the coronavirus pandemic for the safety and health of donors, including:

- Prescreening donors
- Extra precautionary cleaning
- Spacing out donors to comply with social distancing and group gathering restrictions.

All eligible donors will receive a ticket to Six Flags (for future use, valid through Jan. 3, 2021) and a gift card to Big Y or Dunkin'.

Contact the Baystate Health Blood Donor Center at 413-794-4600 with questions or to make an appointment.

GRANTS from page 1

ing," said Schiller. "For example, the firm 'Over Under' will unveil district branding and identity work on April 17 and will host its third workshop the week of April 19, which will be held virtually."

When stay-at-home advisories and non-essential business closures are lifted, MassDevelopment will resume the operation. Meanwhile, Monson has kept in contact with small businesses and organizations within the district, helping them to "adjust, adapt and identify available resources," said Schiller.

MassDevelopment is monitoring the situation closely; the agency is coordinating its efforts with the Baker-Polito Administration and the Economic Office of Housing Development. Schiller reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the state's response to the pandemic.

"MassDevelopment, through our regional teams and on-the-ground TDI Fellows, remains in close communication with our clients to understand circumstances and needs. The relationships forged in communities across the Commonwealth have allowed important communication to continue and will be invaluable in the recovery to come," said Schiller.

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Sign-ups ongoing for Quabbin Valley Baseball League 2020 season

REGION – The Quabbin Valley Over-30 Baseball League is seeking new players for 2020 season. The league has six teams, several with open roster spots. Last year, the league voted to allow players age 28 and 29 to be able to join the league, though players under 30 are not eligible to pitch. The cost of the league this season is $192. For returning players, sign-ups are extended through May 1. New players can also sign up through this date with the draft currently set for May 2. The league hopes to begin play in early June. The season is 15 regular season games plus at least one playoff game. A modified schedule is being worked on by league officials. Games are nine innings and metal (BBCOR -3) or wood bats are allowed. Fields locations are throughout Western Mass. For more information on the league, or if you are interested in registering, go to https://www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org/. The league is also in Facebook.

HALL from page 7

cused Celebration Day on the Aug. 30.

Ticket packages to the 2020 Enshrinement Ceremony and all Enshrinement events are on sale now and available online at www.hoophall.com or by calling the Basketball Hall of Fame at (413) 231-5513. Premium Sponsors of Enshrinement 2020 include Fifty-Five South Ventures, Nike, Baron Championship Rings, Mohegan Sun and Panini.

PVIAC from page 7

"Right now, we really don't know," said Stratton. "This entire exercise (making a modified schedule) could be a futile exercise."

Stratton said under the current format the MIAA has agreed to, spring sports could open up on May 4 for practices with contests able to start on May 11. There would be five weeks of a regular season, down from the usual eight-week regular campaign.

The MIAA and the TMC have also agreed there is not enough time in the contract school year to hold a state tournament, so the sectional tournaments will be the only ones held if the season is able to start.

Gov. Charlie Baker has mandated schools remain close until May 4. The commonwealth is currently in a time period being coined as a "surge" for coronavirus cases, though there have been national signs the social distancing and stay-at-home advisories are being effective. The TMC was scheduled to meet this week to continue discussions about how a tournament held in late June will look, but may not have the ability to make any new decisions until the state government issues updated guidance on school events.

VETERANS from page 1

Approximately 5,000 veterans reside in the city of Chicopee. Veterans Services employees are working remotely to connect them with the medical benefits and financial support that they earned through armed military service.

Brian Willette, the state's commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, is responsible for an even larger contingent. The majority of state's Purple Heart recipients are seniors, he noted.

Like Shaw, Willette is concerned about social isolation. He urges residents to extend a gesture of support to local veterans as a simple token of appreciation.

"There's a feeling of helplessness that I think relates to this current situation. If no one is reaching out to them, they feel alone and forgotten. That's what we're combatting every day. We're trying different ways to let people know what's going on," said Willette.

In Chicopee, the Veterans Services office is open on Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon. Following health guidelines, face-to-face contact will not occur, but Shaw encourages veterans to visit and capitalize on the resources that the office makes available.

"We do have a small food pantry with non-perishable items in our drop-box area. If there's any veterans who need something and want to do it discretely, they can come in and take what they need; no questions asked, no one will see you. Just bring a bag because we don't have those," said Shaw, adding that supplies can only be picked up during office hours.

Both Shaw and Willette have been hindered by the ban placed on large gatherings, as there are a number of military services that cannot be performed at the current time.

"The huge disappointment that we're really facing is not being able to do those events. An even greater disappointment is not being able to honor our fallen heroes, who are dying at the Soldiers' Home. Right now, we can't gather anywhere to pay our respects in a normal way," said Willette.

As of April 13, 38 veterans living at the Soldiers' Home of Holyoke have died from the spread of COVID-19. An investigation is ongoing.

The site is familiar to Willette; it has served as the meeting place for the Western Massachusetts branch the Military Order of the Purple Heart since 2013.

Willette asked that residents and legislators "hold judgment on who is to blame" for the growing tragedy. He expressed concerns that due process has not been properly afforded to Bennett Walsh, the facility's superintendent, who has come under fire in recent weeks. Walsh has been placed on paid administrative leave during the investigation.

Willette believes that the facility is grossly understaffed and lacked the resources necessary to accommodate all of the veterans that call it home. He believes that Walsh requested more resources and support and that the state was aware of problems at the facility.

"Bennett Walsh asked for help from the state and did not receive it. There's a need for more assistance up there; a need for more money, more staffing and better housing conditions, but they've known that," said Willette. "With staffing shortages, they cannot properly care for these veterans. Does that mean a bigger budget? Yes, it does, and that's what we fight for."

Chicopee's Veterans Services office is located at 36 Center St. For help or resources, call 594-3470.

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Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to humor.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 20 = **O**)

A. **7 19 23 20 25**
Clue: Quality of being amusing

B. **10 18 19 6 7**
Clue: React to humor

C. **22 20 13 2**
Clue: Funny tale

D. **12 20 23 2 3 26**
Clue: Professional entertainment with jokes

Answers: A. humor B. laugh C. joke D. comedy

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell
something pertaining to humor.

CHEELK

Answer: Heckle

Guess Who?

I am a singer born in Utah on April 12, 1987. In school I was bullied for being hyperactive, but don't panic. Later that trait would suit my career as a lead singer of a pop rock band that is highly successful today.

Answer: Brandon Urie

COMEDY WORD SEARCH

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W	T	I	I	M	T	C	K	K	M	E	P	P	B	F	E	R	H	E	W
W	I	B	I	S	W	B	E	D	W	H	A	P	P	G	O	T	J	S	D
B	S	R	E	I	V	R	A	D	K	D	R	W	E	D	A	K	N	G	P
A	L	J	E	N	O	H	P	O	R	C	I	M	Y	R	U	A	U	E	A
T	H	P	O	F	K	D	C	R	Y	L	E	K	O	J	T	V	R	L	P

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

AD-LIB
BOMB
BOOKER
CALLBACK
CAPPER
ENTENDRE
GAG
HEADLINER
HUMOR
IMPROVISATION
JEST
JOKE
LAUGH
LINEUP
MICROPHONE
PARODY
PERFORM
ROUTINE
SATIRE
SHOWCASE
SITCOM
SKETCH
SLAPSTICK
STORYLINE

			2	8			4	
			3	9	1			
1		8						7
2	8	6	7		3		5	
				6		7		8
	4					3		
	6	2	4		9		8	3
	7	4		3	6			5
	9			5	2	6		

answers for the week of 4/8

9	2	4	7	5	8	6	1	3
1	3	8	9	4	6	7	5	2
7	5	6	1	2	3	8	4	9
8	9	3	4	6	2	1	7	5
6	1	2	5	3	7	4	9	8
4	7	5	8	9	1	2	3	6
5	4	1	2	8	9	3	6	7
3	8	7	6	1	5	9	2	4
2	6	9	3	7	4	5	8	1

horoscopes

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
Hang on to a source of real empowerment in your career, Aries. It may take willpower and dedication, but you can make it happen when your mind is on the goal.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
You can accomplish anything you set your mind to, Taurus. This may even mean being the boss of yourself with self-discipline. Ask friends to help keep you stay the course.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21
You have the potential to lay the groundwork now for events that will pay dividends throughout the next few years, Gemini. Get a team of trusted advisors on your side.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, while others may be focusing on their careers, you understand the importance of zeroing in on your relationships and love life. Keep those you care about close.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Work will dominate the week, but make sure you advocate for fair treatment while you are hard at work, Leo. Check that payment is in full and timely.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
There will be no surprises for you this week if you simply stay the course with your actions, Virgo. Go about your normal routine and things will work out just fine.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Libra, change things at home so you can better care for children or other people in your charge. A lot of progress can still be made if you redirect your attention.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, things may be moving quite slowly for you, but that does not mean progress has not been made. You'll realize after a few weeks how far you've come.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
Sagittarius, the last few weeks may have come off as humdrum, and that's probably because you didn't take any chances. Be more bold in the days to come.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Capricorn, ask yourself how you want to see your finances grow. Then you can speak with a financial planner and make your dreams a reality.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Everything that involves you moves up on the priority list, Aquarius. Even though you're known for putting others first, this all needs to change if you are to progress.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, take some time this week to be alone and seek inner peace. During these times of contemplation you can focus on future plans.

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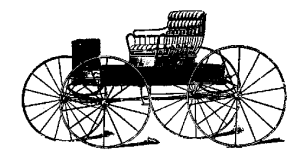
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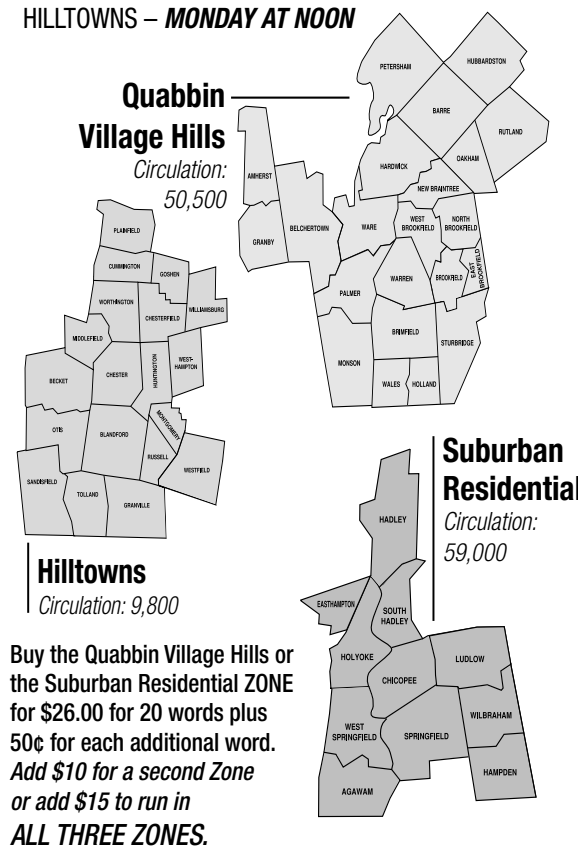
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9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
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21 Base Price $26.50	22 Base Price $27.00	23 Base Price $27.50	24 Base Price $28.00
25 Base Price $28.50	26 Base Price $29.00	27 Base Price $29.50	28 Base Price $30.00
29 Base Price $30.50	30 Base Price $31.00	31 Base Price $31.50	32 Base Price $32.00
33 Base Price $32.50	34 Base Price $33.00	35 Base Price $33.50	36 Base Price $34.00
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Jonathan Kelley/Shawn Walker
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Springfield, MA 01151

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Doris Pessolano
72 Old Lane Rd
Springfield, MA 01129

2002 SUBARU IMPREZA
VIN: JF1GG65522H808975
Damien Dalton
14 Matthews Rd
Southwick, MA 01077

2003 FORD F250 SUPER DUTY
VIN:1FTNX21L63ED45062
Colin Clegg
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South Hadley, MA 01075

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Hebert Wellington
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Grady Ponder
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Joseph Mello
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Edward Kendall
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Leslie Greenlaw
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4/09, 4/16, 4/23/2020

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Child care centers offer services, connections during closure

By Dalton Zbierski
Staff Writer

For ordinary residents, the lingering shutdown put in place to combat the spread of COVID-19 is troublesome, inconvenient and upsetting, but at least it's comprehensible. Unfortunately, for young children who don't understand what is happening, these are confusing times.

"It's very difficult for an adult to wrap their head around this. Times that by 10 for a child to figure out what is going on," said Lisa Hadden Martin, owner and director of Side by Side Pre-School and Childcare Center on Streiber Drive.

Along with schools, child care centers have been mandated to close until May 4 at the earliest. Employees at the Valley Opportunity Council's Family-Based Child Care are working to stay in touch with the young ones that they've accustomed to caring for.

"Staff are delivering education materials in a lot of different ways. We're emailing activities, we're sending videos, some of have tried Zoom and other video conferencing with a little bit of success," said Stephen Huntley, executive director of the VOC.

The VOC's child care facility on Montgomery Street is sitting empty for the most part, but staff members are working remotely to call in and monitor families who rely on the service. The VOC will look to assist patrons who have been left jobless as a result of the pandemic.

"We also ask them if they've had an interruption in their income, and if they say that they have, we're working to get what their new income is to impact their parent fees. Almost all of our children are subsidized, which means a sliding scale based on income. If their income goes down, their parent fees consequently would go down as well," said Huntley.

Huntley summarized the final weeks of March as "the most stressful" that he's endured in a work environment due to uncertainty surrounding what would occur next.

Martin agreed; she serves nearly 65 families. Thinking of them, she elected to temporarily shut down her center before the official order came from Gov. Charlie Baker.

Martin encourages parents to instill a sense of structure into the lives of their young children. She added that "kids don't miss much," and encourages parents to be sensibly honest.

"What works for one child might not work for another child, but the bottom line is to open up the questions; let your kids ask the questions that they need to ask. Take your lead from them and be as honest as you can without frightening them," said Martin.

Anastasia Yanyuk operates a licensed home daycare on Willette Street and employs one helper. Her business was approved for emergency backup care, but its clientele is limited.

"I am taking in a few kids at a time and am trying to be as safe as possible," said Yanyuk. "Keeping them protected is my number one priority. We take their temperature every hour and a half; we keep our gloves on on the changing mat."

As the pandemic continues on, Martin urges parents to be positive and strong around their young children. She explained that possessing a sense of optimism isn't a bad thing.

"They need to know that there is a positive ending in sight. It's not something you can mark on a calendar because nobody knows where the finish line is, but that's where you have to listen to the experts," she said.

Local printer giving face shields, masks to responders

EAST LONGMEADOW – TigerPress recently announced it will give away free face shields and masks to all first responders. An ID will be required and quantities are limited.

Shields and masks are also available to the public for a reasonable fee to help cover out-of-pocket costs for first responders materials. They expect to assemble hundreds of shields and masks each day and have enough materials for thousands.

According to Reza Shafii, president of TigerPress, "It's our way of saying thank you to the courageous men and women in our community who unselfishly put their own health in harms way to help keep us safe during this extremely difficult time."

Ed Demetrion, vice president and event coordinator, said the initial response has been overwhelming.

"We had requests from numerous police and fire departments, EMTs, and ambulance companies throughout Western Mass. They're so appreciative of our efforts," Demetrion said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

TigerPress, located in East Longmeadow, will supply free face shields and masks to first responders during the new coronavirus pandemic.

Masks and shields are available at TigerPress, 50 Industrial Drive, East Longmeadow, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., weather permitting. Product will be available while supplies last.

For information, email FirstResponders@TigerPress.com.

State unemployment applications now available in Spanish

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration recently launched a Spanish language online, mobile-friendly, unemployment benefits application for those who need to apply.

The new, secure application for Spanish speakers is available through mass.gov/desempleo, the Spanish language website for unemployment in Massachusetts.

The Department of Unemployment Assistance will make language applications available in Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese, Vietnamese and additional languages in the coming days.

The new Spanish language form is the latest effort from to deliver crucial COVID-19 information to non-English speakers, including the launch of a COVID-19 text message alert system, also availbel in Spanish.

All of Mass.Gov (including Mass.Gov/COVID19) is available in 13 different languages and the commonwealth's non-emergency helpline for COVID-19, 2-1-1, is available in more than 150 languages.

The new Spanish mobile-friendly application is among several state efforts to reach and assist individuals who are eligible for unemployment benefits and provide the financial assistance they need. Other efforts include:

Updating the DUA website with the latest information that claimants and employers need to know, what the latest federal legislation means for them, and a step-by-step guide to filing a claim available in multiple languages.

The Baker-Polito Administration will continue to update residents on developments related to COVID-19. Residents may visit www.mass.gov/covid19 for the latest information, call 2-1-1 with questions, or text "COVIDMA" to 888-777 to subscribe to text-alert updates (COVIDMAESP for Spanish language alerts).

NAMI conducts support groups via telephone

While public buildings and social gatherings have shut down statewide to limit the impact of the new coronavirus, the National Alliance on Mental Illness-Massachusetts announced call-in capabilities for its Connection Support Groups.

Effective this week, folks will be able to teleconference Mondays at 6:30 p.m., Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 10 a.m. No password is required; participants need only call 508-206-8720.

For more information, email jmaguire@nami-mass.org.

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